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SUBJECT: CONDITIONS IN ALBANIA

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On December 11 an officer of the Embassy had a talk about conditions in Albania with [redacted]

had arrived from Tirana on the scheduled flight of the Rumanian plane which flies weekly between Tirana and Moscow. According to this plane makes the flight from Moscow to Tirana one day and returns to Moscow the next. During the winter months, the service is often irregular and the plane makes an over-night stop in Bucharest by agreement with the Yugoslavs the plane is required to stop at Zemun Airfield, Belgrade, on each overflight of Yugoslavia. The passengers on the plane are required to have Yugoslav transit visas which the Yugoslavs do not grant to Albanian nationals.

Members of the two Western diplomatic missions are restricted to the city of Tirana, a part of which, the quarter reserved for Russians, is prohibited to them. Formerly,

They were permitted to go to Durazzo to receive the shipments, but even then they were not permitted within the port area. Since supplies are no longer received through this port, the trips have been discontinued. She emphasized that even within the permitted area, constant and open surveillance. In this connection, she recounted the following incident. [redacted] reported to the Chief of Protocol that he was being closely followed by a group of five brigands in tattered clothes. He explained that he felt certain the Chief of Protocol would want to be forewarned that something unpleasant might happen since he was sure the brigands were up to no good. The Chief of Protocol profusely thanked [redacted] for this information. Several days later, [redacted] the five individuals who still followed him had been outfitted in completely new clothes from boots to caps.

the Russians have completely taken over the country. She stated that in her opinion overthrow of the regime from within Albania was not a possibility. She discounted also the

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possibility of an open break between Hoxha and Shehu, but added that reliable information on questions such as this was unavailable.

Conditions under which the average Albanian lived were worse than those which had existed in Russia during 1919-1920. Clothing was in tatters and could not be replaced. Albania had suffered a severe drought this summer and the usual diet for the private city inhabitant was composed of black bread and leeks. In contrast, she said that all the many Russians were well-dressed and well-fed, getting their supplies from special stores. In fact, she pointed out that any reasonably well-dressed person who appeared on the streets of Tirana was mistaken for a Russian by the Albanians. She had often had this experience herself.

She added little to the description of the November 29 parade contained in the enclosure to this despatch. She did remark that all of the vehicles in the parade seemed to be in excellent condition and that none had broken down during the parade.

In reply to a question which she said she had often been asked, she said that she had noticed no Bulgarians in Tirana.

In passing she referred to the property of the American Government in Tirana and said it was gradually deteriorating through lack of maintenance.

No reference to the Tito-Sulzberger interview had appeared in the Tirana press. She added that Marshal Tito and Yugoslavia were subject to constant vilification as the principal enemies of Albania. She could throw no light on escapes to Greece and Yugoslavia, but said that in Tirana they had understood that these escapes took place continuously.

She reported that during the spring and summer there had occasionally been bursts of anti-aircraft fire, but that they had not noticed any of these during the last few months.

In sum, she confirmed the impression of Albania as a satellite which has been completely taken over by the Russians, where the domestic dictator aped Russian fashions and obeyed Russian orders, and where the people have been beaten down by years of oppression and poverty.

Enclosure

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Page _____ of _____
Orig. No. _____
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Page _____ of _____
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